

quired booty they purchased partisans who rendered them powerful and terrible. At last they ascended the throne by force.

Historians quote the example of King Dejoces, of the Medes, whom these invested with the royal dignity because he had done them good service as a judge. But it is incorrect to refer this example to the origin of royalty. When the Medes made Dejoces their king, they already constituted a people, a political body; in the present case, the first political society was to be formed by the first king. The Medes had borne the oppressive yoke of the Assyrian monarchs; on the contrary, the king of whom mention is made here, was the first king that ever existed, and the people who submitted to his dominion were a society of free-born men who had never yet known any power to rule over them. A power that had already been tolerated on a previous occasion, may be *restored* in this quiet manner, but in this quiet way no entirely new and hitherto unknown power can be instituted.

It seems therefore more conformable to the course of events to suppose that the first *king* was a usurper, called to the throne, not by a voluntary, unanimous call of the nation—a nation did not yet exist—but by force and fortune, and by a readily organized military power.

THE MISSION OF MOSES.*

THE foundation of the Jewish republic by Moses is one of the most memorable events recorded in history, important if we regard the strength of mind with which it was accomplished, and still more important, if we regard its consequences to the world, which continue even to the present moment. Two religions that govern the larger portion of the inhabited globe—Christianity and Islamism—both rest upon the religion of the Jews; without it neither Christianity nor the Koran would have existed.

In a certain sense it is even indisputable that we are indebted to the religion of Moses for a large portion of the culture we now possess. Through its instrumentality a precious truth—which the unaided efforts of reason would only have discovered in the course of a slowly progressing development—namely, the doctrine of one God, was spread among the people and established as an article of creed, until it had time to dawn in the clearer intellects as a rational perception. By this means a large portion of the human race was spared the sad mistakes to which the belief in many gods must finally lead, and the constitution of the Hebrews enjoyed the characteristic distinction that the religion of their sages was not opposed to that of the people, as was the case among the enlightened heathens. Viewed in this light, the Hebrews must appear to us as a nation invested with high importance as a subject of universal history, and the evil which has been im-

puted to them, or the efforts of shallow wits to degrade them in public appreciation, should not prevent us from doing them justice. The low and depraved character of the nation cannot efface the sublime merit of its lawgiver, nor can it do away with the great influence which this nation has acquired in history. We cannot help valuing it as an impure vessel in which precious treasures have been preserved; we have to respect it as the channel, be it ever so impure, which was chosen by Providence for the purpose of communicating to us the noblest of all goods, truth, and which was destroyed as soon as it had accomplished its purpose. By pursuing this course we shall avoid the double wrong of imputing to the Jews qualities which they never possessed, or of robbing them of a merit that cannot be denied them.

It is well known that the Hebrews went to Egypt as a single nomadic family, not numbering above seventy souls, and that they increased in this country until they had become a nation. During a period of about four hundred years that they resided in Egypt, their numbers increased to about two millions, among whom they counted six hundred thousand fighting men at the time when they marched out of Egypt. During this long sojourn they lived separately from the Egyptians, from whom they were distinguished by a separate region of country, which they occupied, and by their nomadic habits that made them an object of aversion to the Egyptians, and excluded them from the civil rights of the natives. They kept up their nomadic system of government, the father ruled over the family, an hereditary prince over the tribes, thus constituting a state within the state, which finally excited the apprehensions of the kings.

Such a separate multitude of people in the heart of the country, leading an idle nomadic life, and closely united among themselves, without having a single interest in common with the kingdom, might become dangerous during an invasion, and might be tempted to profit by the weakness of the kingdom of which they had been the idle spectators. Political prudence suggested the propriety of watching them closely, of giving them employment, and preventing their increase. They were oppressed by heavy labor, and inasmuch as it was found that they might be made useful to the kingdom, interest and political cunning went hand in hand, and lead to the system of exacting a heavy tribute from them. They were compelled in the most inhuman manner to labor for the king, and special overseers were appointed to incite them to work, and abuse them. This barbarous treatment did not prevent their increase. Sound policy would have thought of distributing them among the people and allowing them equal political rights with the rest of the nations; but this was prevented by the general detestation which the Egyptians felt for them. This detestation was still heightened by the consequences it must necessarily entail. When the Egyptian King assigned to the family of Jacob the province of Goshen, on the east bank of the Nile, as their dwelling-place, he probably never imagined that two millions of people would live in it at some future period; the

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province was of limited extent, although it was a generous gift, even if not calculated for more than the one-hundredth part of this number. Since the locality where the Hebrews resided did not expand with their numbers, the consequence was that with every succeeding generation they lived more closely together, until they were finally crowded together in a very small space in a manner which was exceedingly prejudicial to their health. The consequences of such a mode of existence were inevitable. Uncleanliness and contagious diseases prevailed among them. Here it was that the evil first commenced which has visited this nation to the present period; but at that time it raged to a frightful extent. Leprosy, the most frightful epidemic of those countries, broke out among them, and was perpetuated through many generations. The very sources of life were contaminated by this plague, and an accidental disease was finally converted into an hereditary national malady. The universality of this plague may be inferred from the numerous precautionary measures which the lawgiver instituted against it; and the unanimous testimony of profane writers, the Egyptian author Manetho, Diodorus of Sicily, Tacitus, Lysimachus, Strabo, and a number of others, who scarcely knew any thing else of the Jewish nation than this national malady, shows how universal and deep was the impression it had made upon the Egyptian mind.

This leprous disease, a natural consequence of their confined habitations, of their bad and scanty food, and of the ill treatment which they experienced, became a new cause of injustice and wrong. Those who at first had been despised as shepherds and avoided as strangers, now were detested and expelled from all intercourse, as pestiferous outcasts. The fear and repugnance which the Egyptians had felt against them at all times, were now accompanied by loathing and a deep and repelling contempt. Every thing was deemed lawful against people whom the wrath of the gods had struck down in such a frightful manner, and the most sacred rights of man were disregarded in their case without the least hesitation.

It is no wonder that they were treated the more barbarously, the more the consequences of this barbarous treatment became visible, and that they were punished more and more cruelly for the misery which their own persecutors had inflicted upon them.

The vicious political system sought to remedy the mistakes it had committed against them, by another still more flagrant wrong. Unable, in spite of all oppression, to prevent the increase of the Hebrew nation, the Egyptians hit upon the dreadful and inhuman plan of causing all the new-born sons of the Hebrews to be destroyed by the midwives. But, man's better nature be praised! despots are not always obeyed when they issue inhuman commands! The midwives found means and ways to evade this unnatural order, and the government had to resort to forcible measures in order to execute its plan. By royal command, authorized murderers invaded the dwellings of the Hebrews, destroying every male offspring in the cradle. In this way the Egyptian government must finally succeed in carrying out its murderous

designs, and, unless a saviour should arise, the Jewish nation must eventually be extirpated.

Whence was this saviour to come? He could scarcely be expected to arise among the Egyptians, for why should one of them intercede in behalf of a nation that was a stranger to him, whose language he did not even understand, and would probably not take the trouble of studying, and that seemed to him both incapable and unworthy of a better fate. Still less probable it was that he would arise in their own midst, for how deeply had the Hebrews sunk in the course of a few centuries, in consequence of the inhuman treatment the Egyptians had inflicted upon them! They had become the most brutal, the most malicious and depraved people on the earth, utterly brutalized by the debasing bondage of three hundred years, intimidated and embittered by this oppression, degraded in their own eyes by an hereditary and most infamous disease, unmanned and paralyzed for all heroic resolutions, sunk to the condition of brutes by a long-lasting imbecility. How could a free man, an enlightened mind, a hero and a statesman, be expected to come from such a debased race? Where should a man be found among them who would inspire respect for such a despised mob of slaves, kindle feelings of conscious dignity in the hearts of such a deeply oppressed people, and render such ignorant and raw bands of shepherds superior to their more cunning oppressors? A bold and heroic leader could no more be hoped for among the Hebrews, than among the degraded pariahs of the Hindoos.

Here the hand of Providence, which unties the most complicated knot by the simplest means, excites our admiration, not the Providence which interferes in the economy of Nature by violent means, but the Providence which so arranges the government of Nature as to effect extraordinary things in a quiet way. A native Egyptian was not inspired by the national sympathy necessary to become the saviour of the Hebrews. A mere Hebrew was deficient in power and mind for this purpose. What expedient did destiny resort to? It snatched a Hebrew at an early age from the bosom of his brutalized nation, and placed him in possession of Egyptian wisdom; thus it was that a Hebrew, reared by Egyptians, became the instrument, by means of which his nation was freed from bondage.

For three months, a Hebrew mother of the tribe Levi, had concealed her new-born son from the King's murderers, who were commissioned to destroy every male offspring; at last she abandoned all hope of affording him an asylum much longer. Necessity suggested a ruse that might perhaps enable her to preserve him. She laid her babe in a little box made of papyrus, which she had protected by means of pitch against filling with water, and now awaited the hour when Pharaoh's daughter was in the habit of bathing. Shortly previous, the babe's sister was directed to place the box among the rushes where the princess had to pass, and could not help noticing it. The mother remained in the neighborhood, to watch the fate of the infant. Pharaoh's daughter saw the box, and inasmuch as the babe pleased her, she determined to save it. His sister now ap-

proached and offered to obtain a Hebrew nurse, which was granted. A second time the son was given to his mother, who now enjoyed the privilege of publicly showing and educating him. Thus he learned the language of his people, became acquainted with their customs, and his mother probably took every opportunity of depicting to him their pitiable condition in the most heart-rending language. After he had reached the age when it became necessary to remove him from the common fate of the nation, the mother returned him to the princess who now took charge of his destiny. She adopted him, and called him *Moses*, because he had been saved from the water. In this way, from the son of a slave and the victim of murder, he became the son of a princess, and in this capacity enjoyed all the advantages reserved for the children of kings. The priests to whose order he belonged the very moment he became a member of the royal family, took charge of his education, and instructed him in the erudition of Egypt, which was the exclusive property of their caste. It is even probable that they initiated him in all their mysteries, since we infer from a passage in the Egyptian historian Manetho, where he designates Moses as an apostate from the Egyptian religion and a priest who had escaped from Heliopolis, that Moses was destined for the priestly office.

In order to determine the degree and quality of the instruction which Moses received in this school, and what share the education he received from Egyptian priests, had in his subsequent legislation, we shall have to subject the doctrines and usages of the Egyptian priesthood to a closer examination. Let us hear the testimony of ancient authors on this head. The apostle Stephanus states that Moses was initiated in the wisdom of Egypt. The historian Philo informs us that Moses had been initiated by the Egyptian priests in the philosophy of symbols and hieroglyphics, and in the mysteries of the sacred animals. This testimony is confirmed by a number of other authors, and after casting a glance at what has been called Egyptian mysteries, we shall discover a remarkable similarity between these mysteries and the subsequent acts and institutions of Moses.

We know that the worship of the most ancient nations soon assumed the form of idolatry and superstition; even among tribes whom Holy Writ designates as worshipers of the true God, the notions entertained of the Supreme Being were neither pure nor noble, nor were they at all founded upon a lucid and rational comprehension of his character. As soon as, in consequence of a better organization of human society and the establishment of a regular government, a separation of men into classes had taken place, and the care of divine things had become the exclusive business of a particular class of men; as soon as the human mind, free from all harassing care, had leisure to devote itself exclusively to the contemplation of its own essence and of nature; as soon as the physical mechanism of nature was more clearly understood, the reason must finally overcome those coarse prejudices, and the ideas concerning the Supreme Being must assume a higher and purer character. The idea of a general connection of all things must necessarily lead to the idea of a

Supreme Intelligence, and where should such an idea have taken root sooner than in the mind of a priest? Egypt being the first civilized state of which history makes mention, and the most ancient mysteries having come from Egypt, it was most probably here that the idea of the unity of the Supreme Being was first conceived by the human mind. The fortunate discoverer of this soul-exalting idea selected among those who were around him, able subjects to whom he confided it as a sacred treasure, and thus it was perpetuated from one thinker to another through perhaps an unknown series of generations, until it finally became the property of a small society capable of comprehending the idea, and developing it still further.

Inasmuch as a certain amount of knowledge and intellectual culture is required to correctly comprehend and apply the idea of one God; inasmuch as the belief in one God must necessarily lead to the contempt of idolatry, which was the dominant religion, it was readily seen that it would be indiscreet or even dangerous to spread this idea among the people. Without previously upsetting the customary gods, and showing them in their ridiculous nakedness, this new doctrine could not expect to meet with a favorable reception. Moreover it could not be expected or foreseen that every one who began to feel the absurdity of the old superstition, would at once comprehend the pure and exalted idea of one God. The whole constitution of society was based upon idolatry; if this faith was crushed, all the pillars which supported the political edifice were likewise torn down, and it was very uncertain whether the new religion that was substituted for the former superstition, would at once be established with sufficient firmness to support the social edifice.

On the contrary, if the attempt to crush the ancient gods, failed, fanaticism would rise in arms, and the innovators would become the victims of an enraged crowd. It was therefore deemed advisable to make the new truth the exclusive property of a small class, to select those among the crowd who showed the required capacity, as members of this class, and to invest the truth itself which was to be kept hidden from impure eyes, with a robe of mystery that could only be removed by him who had been capacitated for this business.

For this purpose the hieroglyphics were chosen, a symbolic language that concealed a general idea under the garb of sensual symbols, and was based upon a few arbitrary rules concerning which they had agreed. Having been reminded by the worship of idols what strong impressions may be made upon the youthful heart through the instrumentality of the imagination and the senses, these enlightened men did not hesitate to make use of this artifice in behalf of truth. They therefore conveyed the new ideas to the soul with a certain sensual pomp, and by all sorts of contrivances adapted to this end, they first roused up in the pupil's mind a deep feeling of emotion that rendered the mind more susceptible to the new truth. Of this character were the purifications which the candidate had to undergo, the washings and sprinklings, the wrapping up in linen cloths, abstinence from all sensual enjoyments elevation and

devotional solemnity of the mind by singing, a long-lasting silence, alternate darkness and light, and the like.

These ceremonies, accompanied by those mysterious figures and hieroglyphics, and the truths that lay hidden in them, and were preceded by these formalities, were designated in their integrality as the Egyptian mysteries. They were located in the temples of Isis and Serapis, and constituted the prototype of the subsequent mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, and of the more recent order of the free-masons.

It seems past all doubt that the meaning of the ancient mysteries of Heliopolis and Memphis, during their purity, was the doctrine of one God, refutation of paganism, and the immortality of the soul. Those who participated in these important teachings, called themselves *epoptæ*, or beholders, since the recognition of a previously hidden truth may be compared to the transition from darkness to light, or perhaps for the reason that the newly recognized truths were actually beheld by them under the garb of symbolic signs.

They could not, at once, enjoy the full perception of the truth, because the mind had first to be purified of many errors, and had first to pass through many preparations before it was able to bear the full light of truth. Hence there were degrees of initiation, and it was only in the inner sanctuary that the scales were completely removed from their eyes.

The *epoptæ* acknowledged one highest cause of all things, a primary force in Nature, the Being of beings being identical with the demiurgos of Greek sages. Nothing surpasses in sublimity the simple greatness with which they spoke of the Creator of the world. In order to distinguish him in a very marked manner, they did not name him. Names, they said, are only intended to enable us to discriminate between different objects; he who is the Only One does not require a name, for there is not any body with whom he could be confounded. Under an old statue of Isis the following inscription was read: "*I am what is,*" and upon a pyramid in Sais, the following ancient and most remarkable inscription is found: "*I am who is, was, and will be; no mortal man has lifted my veil.*" No one was permitted to enter the temple of Serapis, who did not wear upon his breast or forehead the name *Iao* or *Joha-ho*, a name that has almost the same sound and probably the same meaning as the Hebrew *Jehovah*; and no name was pronounced with more respect in Egypt than this name *Iao*. In the hymn which the hierophant or president of the sanctuary sang to the candidate, the following preliminary explanation was given concerning the nature of the deity. "He is alone and of himself, and to this only One all things owe their existence."

Before being initiated in the Egyptian mysteries, the candidate had to undergo circumcision. Pythagoras had to comply with this requirement. This distinction between them and others who were not circumcised, was to denote a closer fraternity, a closer relation to the deity, for which purpose Moses introduced circumcision among the Hebrews.

In the interior of the temple the candidate saw

several sacred vessels significative of some sacred meaning. Among them was a sacred ark named the coffin of Serapis, which, according to its origin, was intended as a symbol of hidden wisdom, but afterward, when the priesthood had degenerated, was used as an instrument of priestly fraud and mercenary mysticism. It was the privilege of the priest, or of a special class of ministers of the sanctuary, named on this account, *Kistophors*, to carry the ark in the procession. Only the hierophant was permitted to remove the lid of the ark, or even to touch it. Of one person who had the boldness to open it, it is related that he was suddenly bereft of his reason.

In the Egyptian mysteries several hieroglyphical images of gods were seen, that were composed of several figures of animals. The well-known Sphinx is of this kind; by these figures it was intended to designate the attributes which are united in the Supreme Being, or else to combine in one body the highest powers of the living. Something was taken from the mightiest bird, as the eagle; from the mightiest wild quadruped, as the lion; from the most powerful domestic animal, as the bull; and lastly from the most powerful animal of all, man. The figure of the bull, or *Apis*, was especially employed as the symbol of power, in order to designate the omnipotence of the highest Being; in the primitive tongue the name for bull is *cherub*.

These mystic forms, to which none but the *epoptæ* had the key, imparted to the mysteries themselves a sensual exterior which deceived the people, and partook somewhat of the character of idolatry. Thus the superstition of the people was sustained by the external garb of the mysteries, whereas those who dwelled in the sanctuary discarded it with scorn.

We can comprehend how this pure deism was compatible with idolatry, for while the latter was overturned among the priests, it was favored among the people. This contradiction between the religion of the priests and that of the people was excused by the first founders of the mysteries on the score of necessity. It seemed less dangerous and less impracticable, because leaving more room for hope, to arrest the evil consequences of a concealment than those of a premature unveiling of truth. But in proportion as unworthy members were received among the initiated, and the institution lost its primitive purity, mystery, which had originally been a necessary expedient, was set up as the ultimate end of worship; and instead of gradually removing superstition and fitting the people for the reception of truth, advantage was taken of their ignorance, and they were plunged more and more deeply into it. Priestly artifice now took the place of those pure intentions, and the institution whose object it was to preserve, and cautiously to spread a knowledge of the only true God, now became the most powerful means of eradicating it, and substituting in its place an idolatrous worship. In order to preserve their influence over the public mind, hierophants deemed it advisable to postpone their ultimate disclosures as long as possible, and, instead of gratifying the expectation of knowing the truth, to obstruct the avenues to the sanctuary by all sorts of theatrical tricks. At last the key to the hieroglyphics and

mysterious symbols was entirely lost, and whereas, it was the original design to use them as a veil for truth, they were now regarded as truth itself.

It is difficult to say whether Moses was educated during the bright period or the decay of the institution; it is probable that the institution was already declining, as we may judge from a few juggleries which the Jewish lawgiver borrowed from the mysteries, and from a few rather inglorious tricks which he resorted to. But the spirit of the original founders had not yet disappeared, and the doctrine of one God still rewarded the initiated.

This doctrine which necessarily leads to a contempt of idolatry, and the belief in the immortality of the soul which could not well be separated from such a doctrine, were the precious treasures vouchsafed to Moses by his initiation in the mysteries of Isis. At the same time he obtained a more accurate knowledge of the powers of Nature which were likewise ranked among the mysteries. This knowledge enabled him afterward to perform miracles, and to contend in Pharaoh's own presence with his teachers and magicians whom he even surpassed in many respects. His subsequent career shows us that he had been an able disciple, and had reached the highest degree of initiation.

In the school where he was educated, he gathered a treasure of hieroglyphics, mystic figures and ceremonies, of which his genius afterward availed itself. He had wandered through the whole domain of Egyptian wisdom, had penetrated with his thoughts the whole priestly system, had weighed in the balance its defects and its advantages, its strength and its weakness, and had cast a deep and significant glance into the political science of the people.

It is not known how long he remained in the school of the priests, but from the fact that he first assumed the political leadership of his nation at the age of eighty years, we infer that he devoted twenty or more years to the study of the mysteries and of the art of government. His sojourn among the priests does not seem to have excluded him from intercourse with his people, and he had abundant opportunities of witnessing the barbarities under which they groaned.

The Egyptian education had not extinguished his national sympathies. The abuse which his people suffered, reminded him of his Hebrew extraction, and a deep feeling of indignation was kindled in his bosom whenever he saw one of them maltreated. The more his own self-respect increased, the more he revolted at the sight of the cruelties which his people had to endure.

One day he saw a Hebrew wincing under the blows of an Egyptian overseer; the sight overpowered him; he killed the Egyptian. Soon the deed became known, he had to flee from Egypt and hide himself in the Arabian desert. According to many authors, this flight took place in his fortieth year, but there is no proof for this statement. It is sufficient for us to know that Moses was not very young when it occurred.

This exile is the beginning of a new epoch in his life; if we desire to judge correctly his subsequent political career in Egypt, we have to ac-

company him through his solitude in the Arabian wilderness. He carried a bloody hatred against the oppressors of his people, and the knowledge he had derived from the Egyptian mysteries, along with him into the desert. His mind was full of ideas and plans, his heart full of bitterness, and nothing in this wild and uninhabited region disturbed his solemn and contemplative mood.

According to the record, he guarded the sheep of an Arabian Bedouin, Jethro. How deeply his soul must have been wounded by the fall from his prospects and hopes in Egypt to the position of a shepherd in Arabia, from the future ruler of men to the hired servant of a Nomad?

Dressed as a shepherd, he was animated by the spirit of a ruler, by a restless ambition. In this desert, where no present interest chains his mind, he seeks refuge in the past and future, and feeds upon his own silent thoughts. The scenes of oppression he had witnessed, now pass before him with all the pang of past wrongs, and sting his soul to the quick. Nothing seems more intolerable to a great soul than to suffer wrong; moreover it was his own people that were suffering. A noble pride is awakened in his breast, and an intense desire for action and distinction inflames his heart.

All that he has gathered during many years, all the beautiful and great things he has planned, is all this to die with him in this wilderness? is he to have planned and meditated to no purpose? His fiery soul cannot bear such a thought; he raises himself above fate; this wilderness is not to be the limit of his activity; the Supreme Being into whose knowledge he has been initiated in the mysteries, has destined him for something great. His imagination, inflamed by solitude and silence, takes the part of the oppressed which appeals most powerfully to his heart. Like feelings attract each other, and the unfortunate most readily sympathizes with his unfortunate brother. In Egypt he might have become an Egyptian, a hierophant, a general; in Arabia he becomes a Hebrew. The idea: "I will redeem this people," looms up in his mind as a glorious thought.

But how was it possible for him to carry out his plan? There are countless obstacles in the way, and those which he has to contend against among his own people, are the most terrible of them all. There he finds neither harmony nor confidence, neither self-respect nor courage, neither patriotism nor the enthusiasm that will rouse a bold desire for action; a long bondage, an oppression of four hundred years has stifled all these sentiments. The people at whose head he is to place himself, are both incapable and unworthy of a bold struggle for independence. What remains to be done? Before attempting the deliverance of his people, he must first prepare them for this blessing. He must first re-awaken the consciousness of the human rights they have lost. He must restore the qualities which a long degradation has stifled among them; he must kindle hope, confidence, heroism, and enthusiasm in their hearts.

But these sentiments can only arise from the true or illusory consciousness of strength, and whence are the slaves of the Egyptians to derive this consciousness? Suppose he should succeed

in carrying them away for a moment by his eloquence, will not this artificial enthusiasm leave them in the lurch at the first sight of danger? Will they not, more dispirited than ever, relapse into bondage?

Here the Hebrew is assisted by the Egyptian priest and statesman. From his mysteries, from his school at Heliopolis he remembers the efficient instrument by means of which a small priestly caste governed millions of raw men like a band of untutored children. This instrument is confidence in supernatural protection, faith in supernatural agencies. Not knowing any thing in visible nature, in the natural course of things, which would inspire the hearts of his oppressed people with courage; unable to bind their confidence to earthly things, he binds it to heaven. Abandoning the hope of exciting in their hearts the consciousness of their own strength, he gives them a God who possesses it for them. If he succeeds in kindling the confidence in this God in their breasts, he has given them strength and boldness, and the confidence in this higher power is the flame by means of which he will have to kindle all their other virtues and energies. If he succeeds in imposing himself upon his people as the instrument and messenger of this God, they became like playthings in his hands; he will be able to guide and control them as he pleases. The question now occurs: What God is he to announce to them, and by what means shall he be able to inspire them with confidence in him?

Is he to announce to them the true God, the Demiurgos or Iao in whom he himself believes?

How can he imagine that a slavish rabble like his own people, will comprehend and cherish a truth that was the heritage of a few Egyptian sages, and the comprehension of which required a high degree of culture? How could he hope that the dregs of Egypt would comprehend that which could only be comprehended by the best thinkers of the land?

But, even if he had succeeded in imparting a knowledge of the true God to his people, in their present situation they could not have made use of him, and the knowledge of such a God would have undermined rather than promoted his project. The true God cared for the Hebrews no more than for any other people. The true God could not do battle for them, could not overturn the laws of Nature for their sakes. The true God suffered them to fight their battle with the Egyptians, without assisting them in the struggle by miracles; of what use was such a God to his people?

Is he to announce to them a false and fabulous God, against which his reason rebels, whom the mysteries have rendered odious to him? His understanding is too enlightened, his heart too sincere and noble for such fraud. He is not disposed to base his beneficent enterprise upon a lie. The enthusiasm he now feels, would not lend him its fire for an act of fraud, and he would soon lack the cheerful courage and perseverance for a contemptible part that would be so much opposed to his convictions. He designs to render the blessing he is on the point of imparting to his

people, perfect; he not only designs their independence, but likewise their happiness. He wants to build his work upon eternal foundations.

Therefore it must not be based upon fraud, but upon truth. How is he to conciliate all these contradictions? As regards the true God, he cannot announce him to his people, because they are unable to comprehend him; and he is unwilling to announce a fabulous god, because he despises this trick. What, therefore, remains for him to do. *but to announce to them his true God in a fabulous manner.*

He now examines his rational religion, and tries to determine what he has to add to or take from it, in order to secure for it a favorable reception among his Hebrews. He identifies himself with their situation, with their limited powers of comprehension, and, by diving into his people's own minds, he explores the hidden threads to which he has to fasten his truth.

He provides his God with such attributes as can be comprehended by the Hebrews in their present condition, and as are adequate to their present wants. He adapts his Iao to the people to whom he intends to announce him; he adapts him to the circumstances under which he announces him. Thus arises his Jehovah.

In the minds of his people he discovers faith in divine things, but this faith has degenerated into the crudest superstition. He has to eradicate the superstition, without impairing the faith. He has only to detach it from its present unworthy object, and turn it toward his new deity. The superstition itself favors him in his undertaking. It was a common belief in those times, that every nation was under the protection of a special national deity, and it pleased the national pride to place this deity above the gods of every other nation. The divine character of these gods was not denied on this account, only they must not elevate themselves above the gods of other nations. Upon this error Moses grafted his truth. He made the demiurgos of the mysteries the national God of the Hebrews, but he went a step further.

He did not content himself with making this God the national God of the Hebrews, he likewise made him the only God, and hurled all other gods round about him into annihilation. He made him the Hebrews' own God, in order to accommodate himself to their comprehension, but at the same time he subjected all other nations and powers of nature to his sway. By the manner in which he represented his God to the Hebrews, he saved two of his most important attributes, unity and omnipotence, and rendered them more efficient in this human garb.

The puerile vanity of possessing the deity exclusively, now had to be made subservient to the interest of truth, and had to secure willing ears to his doctrine of one God. It is only a new error by means of which he overthrows the former; but this new error is much nearer to the truth than the one which he overthrows; it is this slight admixture of error which secures the success of his truth; it is to this foreseen and indeed premeditated misapprehension of his doctrine that he is indebted for all the good he accomplishes by means of it. What could his Hebrews have ac-

complished with his philosophical God? With such a national God, on the contrary, he achieves wonders among them. Identify yourselves with the condition of the Hebrews. In their ignorance they measure the strength of the gods by the fortune of the nations over whom they watch. Abandoned and oppressed by men, they imagine they are forgotten by the gods; the relation which they hold to the Egyptians, must be held by their God to the gods of the latter; compared to these, he is a small light, they even doubt his existence. Suddenly they are told that they too have a protector in the Heavens, that this protector has waked up from his slumber, that he is girding himself, and preparing to do great deeds against his enemies.

This announcement of their God is like the call of a chieftain to place himself under his victorious banner. If this leader gives them a proof of his strength, or if they happen to remember him from former periods, the delirium of enthusiasm will overpower even the most timid; this result was likewise calculated by Moses in conceiving his plan.

The conversation he had with the vision in the burning bush, shows us the doubts he had conceived in his own mind, and the manner in which he had solved them. Will my unhappy nation win confidence in a God who had neglected it so long, who now descends to the people suddenly as from the clouds, whose name they have not even heard, who had been for centuries an idle spectator of the abuse they had to suffer at the hands of their oppressors? Will they not regard the God of their enemies as the more mighty? This thought must more immediately arise in the heart of the new prophet. How does he remove his doubts? He makes his Iao the God of their fathers, he grafts him upon their old traditions, thus converting him into an old, well-known national God. In order to show that he meant the true and only God, in order to prevent all confusion with any of the monstrous outbirths of superstition, in order to leave no room for misapprehensions, he invests him with the sacred name he has in the mysteries. I am who I am. Tell the people of Israel, he makes him say, *I am* has sent me to you.

In the mysteries, this was really the name of the deity. To the stupid Hebrews this name must be unintelligible. They could not possibly understand any thing by this name, and Moses might have had more success with another name; but he preferred running this risk to giving up an idea in which his whole soul was interested, which was, to acquaint the Hebrews with the God who was taught in the mysteries of Isis. Since it is pretty certain that the Egyptian mysteries had flourished long before Jehovah appeared to Moses in the bush, it is surprising that he assumed the same name for his God that he had been known by, in the mysteries of Isis.

It was not sufficient that Jehovah announced himself to the Hebrews as the God of their fathers, he had likewise to prove himself a powerful God, if they were to have confidence in him; this was the more necessary, as their previous condition in Egypt could not possibly have given

them a high opinion of their protector. Inasmuch as he was introduced by a third person, he had to invest this person with his own power, and enable him to demonstrate by extraordinary acts, both his own mission and the power and greatness of him who sent him.

If Moses intended to justify his mission, he had to support it by miraculous acts. There is no doubt that these acts were performed. How they were performed, and how they have to be understood, is left to every man's own discretion.

The form in which Moses related his mission to the Hebrews, has all the characteristics necessary to inspire them with confidence, and this was sufficient for the time being; with us this effect is no longer needed. We know, for instance, that, if the Creator of the world should conclude to appear before a man in fire or wind, it is indifferent to him whether the man is barefoot or not. Moses makes his Jehovah order him to take off his shoes, for he knew that among his Hebrews the idea of divine sanctity had to be assisted by some sensual symbol; such a symbol had adhered to his memory from the ceremonies of initiation.

He doubtlessly anticipated the objections that might be raised against him, and embodied them in his narrative, where they were answered by Jehovah himself. He moreover did not accept his mission until after a long resistance; hence the command of God, who imposed this mission upon him, must seem so much more solemn. In general he depicts with the most characteristic and striking details that which the Israelites would find it the most difficult to believe, and it is beyond doubt that he had good reason for doing so.

If we condense our previous remarks in one short sentence, what was the plan which Moses proposed to himself in the wilderness?

He intended to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, give them independence, and a political constitution of their own in a separate country. But inasmuch as he was well acquainted with the difficulties that would beset him in such an undertaking; inasmuch as he knew that the energies of those people could not be depended upon until their confidence in themselves, courage, hope, and enthusiasm had been restored; inasmuch as he foresaw that his eloquence would not be able to rouse the slavish feelings of his crushed countrymen, he perceived the necessity of announcing to them a higher and supernatural protection, and of ranging them, as it were, under the banner of a divine leader.

He therefore gives them a God whose first business is to deliver them out of Egypt. But this is not sufficient. In the place of the country he takes from them, he has to give them another, which they first have to conquer with arms in their hands, and where they have to maintain themselves by similar means. For this purpose, he unites their forces in a political body, and gives them laws and a constitution.

In his capacity of priest and statesman, he knows that the most powerful and the most indispensable support of all political constitutions is religion; he therefore has to employ the God whom he had given them only for the purpose of delivering them out of Egypt, as his guide in pre-

paring a code of laws for his people; and he announces him in the character with which he intended to invest him. For purposes of legislation, and the foundation of a political constitution, he requires the help of the true God, for Moses is a great and noble man, who is unable to found upon a lie a work that is to last forever. He designs to realize the permanent happiness of the Hebrews by the constitution he intends to give them, and this end can only be reached by founding his legislation upon truth. Their mental faculties are too dull to receive this truth; he is unable to familiarize their souls with it by rational means. Being unable to convince them, he has to persuade, bribe, overpower them by the influence of supernatural agencies. He invests the God whom he announces to them, with attributes that render him comprehensible and commendable to feeble minds; he has to envelop him in a heathenish robe, and has to be content if his people only estimate the heathenish attributes of his true God, and receive the true only in a heathenish dress. By this means he gains a great deal; the basis of his legislation is truth; a future reformer need not first overthrow the constitution, in order to change a few definitions,—a result which is inevitable in all false religious systems, as soon as they are examined by the light of reason.

All the other states of that period, and even of subsequent ages, are based upon fraud and delusions, and upon idolatry, although we have shown that in Egypt a small caste entertained correct notions of the Supreme Being. Moses, who belongs to this caste, and is indebted to it for his better knowledge of the Supreme Being, is the first who not only dares to divulge these secret doctrines of the mysteries, but to make them the basis of a political constitution. For the benefit of his age and of posterity, he becomes a traitor against the mysteries, and causes a whole nation to partake of a truth that had hitherto been the exclusive privilege of a few sages. It is true, with the new religion it was beyond his power to impart to them the power to comprehend it; in this respect the Egyptian epoptæ enjoyed a great advantage over them. The epoptæ recognized truth by their reason; all that the Hebrews could do was to blindly believe it.*

THE LEGISLATION OF LYCURGUS AND SOLON.† LYCURGUS.

In order to appreciate the plan of Lycurgus as it deserves, we have to look back upon the political condition of Sparta as it existed at that period, and study the constitution which the re-

public possessed at the time when Lycurgus proposed to offer his new code of laws. Two kings, both of them having equal power, were at the head of the government; each jealous of the other, each endeavoring to create for himself a party, and to limit by such means the power of his associate. From the two first kings, Procles and Eurysthenes, this jealousy had been perpetuated by their respective descendants down to the period when Lycurgus made his appearance upon this stage; During this long period Sparta had been continually disturbed by factions. Each king sought to bribe the people by granting extraordinary license, and these grants finally drove the people to insolence and rebellion. Between monarchy and democracy the republic was balancing to and fro, passing rapidly from the one extreme to the other. The rights of the people and the powers of royalty were not yet distinguished by suitable and fixed lines of demarkation, riches accumulated in a few families. The rich citizens tyrannized over the poor, and the despair of the latter broke out in rebellion.

Torn by internal discord the feeble republic had to become the prey of its warlike neighbors, or else split into several tyrannical governments. It is in this condition that Sparta was found by Lycurgus; ill-defined limits of the royal and popular powers, unequal distribution of property among the citizens, want of public spirit and harmony, and a complete political exhaustion, were the evils that claimed the most urgent attention of the legislator, and which he had therefore chiefly to consider in framing his laws.

On the day that Lycurgus intended to promulgate his new laws, he caused thirty of the most influential citizens whom he had first gained over to his cause, to appear in the public square; they were armed in order to intimidate those who might feel tempted to resist. King Charilaus, frightened by these arrangements, fled into the temple of Minerva, because he imagined that this whole movement was directed against himself. But this fear being removed from him, he was even prevailed upon to give an active support to the plan of Lycurgus.

The first change affected the government. In order to prevent hereafter all uncertain wavering of the republic between royal tyranny and anarchical democracy, Lycurgus created a third power which was to serve as a counterbalancing influence, and was denominated the Senate. The Senators, of whom there were twenty-eight, making thirty with the kings, were to side with the people if the kings abused their power; on the contrary, if the people should become too powerful, they were to side with the kings, and protect them against the people. An excellent arrangement by means of which Sparta escaped forever from the violent internal commotions that had convulsed it heretofore. By this means either party was prevented from trampling on the other; against both the Senate and the people the kings were powerless; nor could the people arrogate to themselves the reins of power, if the kings and the Senate were arrayed against them.

A third case had been overlooked by Lycurgus; where the Senate itself abused its power. As a

* The readers of this essay may be reminded of an essay of a similar import, entitled: *On the most ancient Hebrew Mysteries*, by Br. Decius, a celebrated and highly deserving author, from which essay I have extracted a few ideas and facts here enunciated.

† These Lectures were first published in the eleventh number of the *Thalia*.